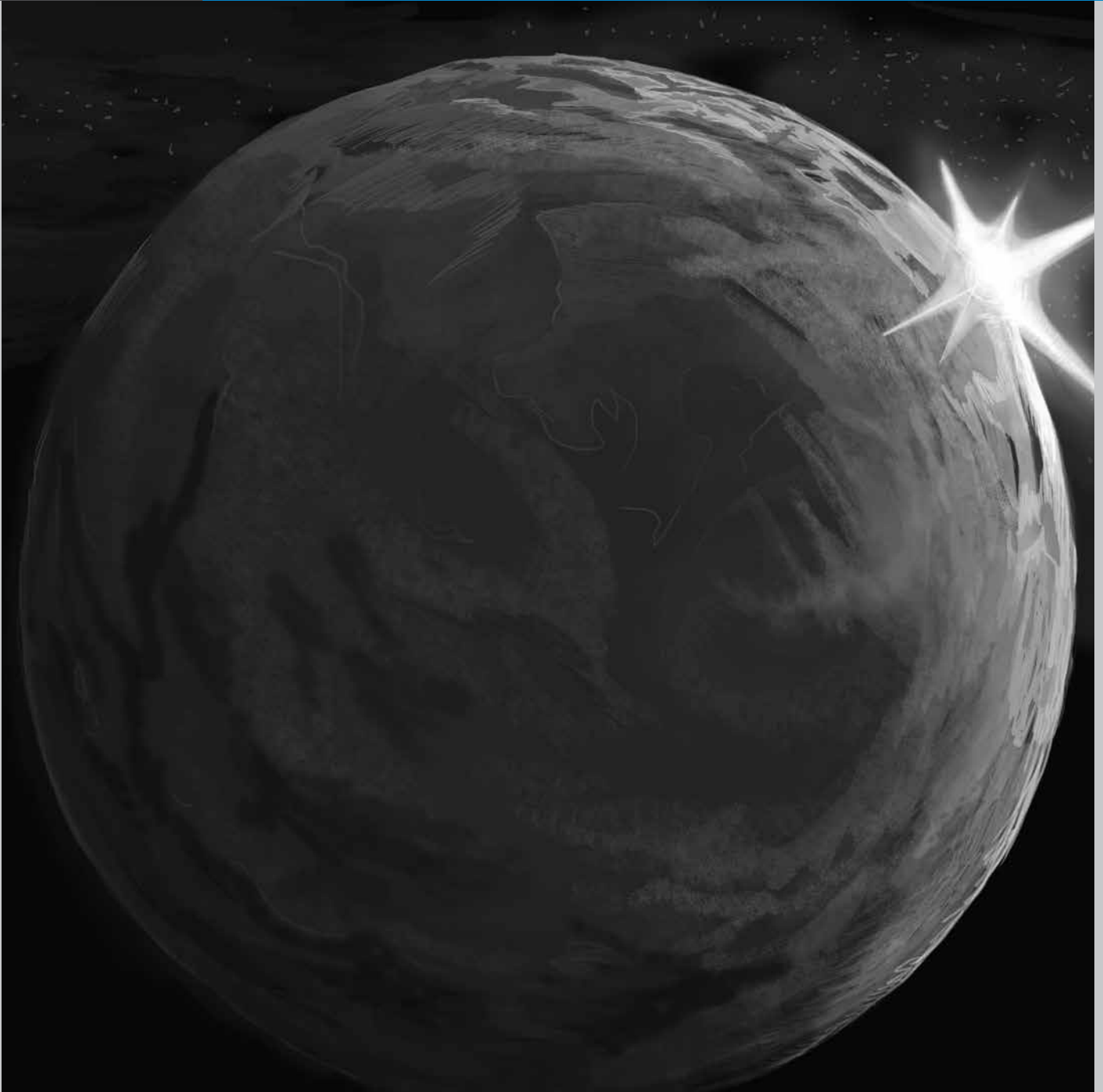




Imperial Academy Bible Lessons



Back to the Beginning

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The Bible is like an amazing mirror. It reflects not only the past, but also the *future*. It also reflects *invisible* things: the reasons why human beings do the things they do, the strengths and weaknesses in our character, and what our actions will lead to. Looking into this mirror can help you see amazing truths, truths you can live by, truths that will make your life healthy, fun and meaningful.

To discover the truths that will change your life, go to your Bible and open it up. Study it every day. Day by day, its reflections will become more and more clear. The image might seem dark at first (1 Corinthians 13:12), but if you continue to study and you pray to the Author of the Bible, He will help you clearly see the past, the future and what to do *now* so that He can make your life more awesome.

This level of the *Imperial Academy Bible Lessons* will complete your study of the Old Testament. You will learn about angelic wars in outer space, about global disasters, about powerful kings, and about servants of God who saw God perform tremendous miracles. *You* can see these same spectacular events. *You* can see into the past, the future and into the workings of your own life. All you need is a willingness to take action with your Bible, a pencil and a prayerful attitude!

GOD AND THE WORD

Turn in your Bible to Genesis 1:2 and read it. Look back in time to a different world. At this point, there is nothing but cold darkness. There are no plants, no animals, no people—not even dry land. You can't see the sun, moon or stars. This planet is a darkened, icy wasteland!

Is this how Earth began? No! Isaiah 45:18 records that God created this planet to be *inhabited*. He made the Earth to be a paradise. When He originally

created it, the weather was warm and beautiful; the land and sea were full of amazing creatures, including peaceful dinosaurs.

But something went wrong.

To see how Earth began and what went wrong, you have to go further back in time. Genesis is the first book of the Bible, but to read about the beginning of the universe, you will have to search out a different book.

Read John 1:1 to fill in the blanks: "In the _____ was the _____, and the _____ was with God, and the _____ was God."

This is the *true* beginning. This was the earliest existence: before the Earth, before the stars, before time itself! For the past eternity, all that existed were two magnificent, glorious, powerful Superbeings—their eyes like flames of fire, their voices like thundering waterfalls. They were together, and they shined like enormous, blindingly brilliant suns!

These Superbeings were intimately related to each other, like being in the same family—much like you are part of the _____ family (write your last name). The first Superbeing was called God; the second was called the Word. The Word was together *with* God, and the Word *was* God.

These two God Beings conversed, did things, lived a *way of life*. For eternity, that way of life was to give, share, cooperate and love. Then, at some long ago point in time, God and the Word chose to share and love even more. They decided to create more beings to love! They would make these beings with the ability to think and choose, sharing this wonderful, God-like way of life with them.

They would do this by using the Holy Spirit, which is the power of God. With the Holy Spirit, God and the Word would generate fantastic creations out of literally *nothing*.

For all eternity, God and the Word used government, which defined their relationship with one another—it was how they interacted with each other. They were equal in power, but they had different roles. The God Being known as God was in charge. He was the chief designer of all creation. The God Being known as the Word was the speaker. God told the Word what to create, and the Word spoke those exact things into existence. “All things were made by him [the Word],” says John 1:3, “and without him [the Word] was not any thing made that was made.”

You can use the Bible to speed ahead thousands or even millions of years and find out more about God and the Word. Turn to verse 14 and then fill in the blanks: “And the _____ was made _____, and _____ among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only _____ of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” The Word came to Earth as a human and became Jesus Christ. When He did so, He became the *Son of God*, and God became *God the Father*!

But let’s return to God and the Word at the time of the original creation. These two God Beings spent an extensive amount of time thinking over, conversing about, and planning out this creation. They do everything decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40). This is a powerful lesson we can learn from the God Family.

The Bible also reveals a description of a tremendous moment in God’s plan. Read about it in Job 38:6-7: “Whereupon are the foundations [of the earth] fastened? or who laid the _____ thereof; When the morning _____ sang together, and all the _____ of _____ shouted for joy?”

This passage reveals that God built the Earth. It also reveals that before He set its foundations, there were already “morning stars.” These morning stars witnessed this event and erupted into singing and celebrating when they saw God building Earth.

These morning stars are better known as angels. Angels are spirit beings that God created before creating Earth and the rest of the planets, stars and other matter in the physical universe. When God created the universe, they were present—and they were in awe.

God and the Word created angels. The created angels are obviously lesser beings than their Creators.

They were created to serve God and to experience His awesome way of life.

Even though they are much lower than God, angels are spirit beings. This means they have greater power and more-capable minds, in addition to being immortal (not subject to physical death). There is also a variety of angels. Each has its own personality, thinks its own thoughts, and makes its own decisions. Some are more musical; some are more powerful. The angels with the highest positions and the most power are called archangels; the three mentioned in the Bible are Michael, Gabriel and Lucifer.

THE ANGELS REBEL

Lucifer was one of the angels who trained in the throne room of God. He was there when God created the Earth and the universe. He saw this beautiful planet come into being as the Word spoke. And he had a special connection to Earth: God appointed him to rule Earth to make it more beautiful. A vast number of angels was assigned to help Lucifer as he administered God’s government.

Then something went horribly wrong.

More and more, Lucifer’s thoughts began to turn to one subject: *himself*. He thought about his beauty; he thought about his talents; he thought about his intelligence. And he made the choice to become prideful. As his pride grew, he began to resent God. He began to covet the power that God had. He began to lose the humility of one who didn’t even *exist* until God made him.

Lucifer rejected living God’s eternal, loving way of life. He began to think of a new way, a different way. If he were in charge, he would rule the universe differently.

Lucifer began to spread his ideas. He talked to the other angels; he told them God was unfair. He told them they shouldn’t let God decide what was right and wrong—they should decide it for themselves. He said his way, *competition*, was better than God’s way, *cooperation*. Many angels believed Lucifer.

After probably a considerable amount of time, they launched a war against God.

This was not a surprise attack. God knew Lucifer’s thoughts. He even recorded them in the Bible. Turn to Isaiah 14:13-14, and you can also see what was in Lucifer’s mind: “For you have said in your heart, I [Lucifer] will _____ [go up] into

_____, I will exalt my _____ above the stars of _____: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most _____.”

God and the Word are infinitely more powerful than the angels they had created. It was impossible for Lucifer and his angels to win a war against God. But God allowed Lucifer to come against Him so that He could see which angels would follow Him and which angels would follow Lucifer.

The war that then exploded devastated the Earth and most or all of the universe. One out of every three angels followed Lucifer and revolted against God. The rest of the angels stayed loyal to God and fought back, led by the archangel Michael. The scale and intensity of the war was shocking! Stars exploded; moons smashed into pieces; planets hurtled out of orbit. Debris crashed through the atmosphere. Tidal waves sunk continents. All physical life in the universe, including life on Earth, died.

Earth, along with the rest of the universe, became a formless, hemorrhaging world of darkness and lifelessness.

Genesis 1:2 reveals what Earth was like after this catastrophic war: “And the earth became [‘was’ is a bad translation] without _____, and _____; and _____ was upon the face of the deep.”

After God confirmed which angels were loyal to His way of life, He personally cast Lucifer and his angels back to Earth, and they fell like lightning bolts (Luke 10:18). God called the traitor angels demons, and he changed Lucifer’s name to Satan, which means *enemy*!

THE RE-CREATION

After the angelic rebellion, God knew only God beings could be fully trusted to live His way of love. He and the Word began implementing a new plan to create more God beings. This plan was already in their minds, but it involved tremendous risk. It involved the creation of man.

The first step of the plan recorded in the Bible was the renewing of the Earth. *To see how God did this, read Genesis 1:3 through Genesis 2:3. Write in your own words what God did on each day of the re-creation week:*

First Day: _____

Second Day: _____

Third Day: _____

Fourth Day: _____

Fifth Day: _____

Sixth Day: _____

Seventh Day: _____

All this work led up to God’s creations on day six and day seven. On day six, God made human beings. These physical, mortal, creations were made to reason and make choices, like the angels. They could choose God’s way of life or reject it, like the angels. But unlike angels, human beings who *obey* God could be transformed into God beings! Humans were created to have the *amazing* potential to become *real* members of the God Family like the Father and the Son!

On day seven, God created the Sabbath, a special time for human beings to learn about God’s incredible plan for them!

THE TWO TREES

God created the first man, Adam, out of clay. He then took one of Adam’s ribs and fashioned it into a wife for him. Adam named this woman Eve. She was created to be his companion and to help make it possible for many more human beings to be born.

God planted a spectacular garden to be a home for Adam and Eve. Like Lucifer before them, Adam and Eve were given the opportunity to beautify this place: the Garden of Eden. The Word personally taught Adam and Eve about the God Family plan. He also planted two special trees in the middle of the garden. The first tree was the tree of life. It represented God’s way of give. The Word told Adam and his wife that if they ate from this tree, God would give them a small portion of His Holy Spirit. This would help them obey God and lead them on the path to eternal life!

The second tree was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It represented Satan’s way of selfishness, competition and making up your own definitions of right and wrong. The Word warned that if Adam and Eve ate from this tree, they would make the same mistake as Lucifer. They would reject God and live a life of selfishness, which leads to misery and ultimately to death.

After Adam and Eve learned about God’s way of life, God allowed Satan to test them. Genesis 3 records that Satan took the form of a serpent and spoke to Eve. He told her God had lied. He told her that selfishness

was a better way than obedience to God, that God was preventing them from having something better! Eve believed the serpent and ate the fruit God told her not to eat. She gave some of the fruit to Adam; he also disobeyed God and ate it.

God could have prevented this, but He wanted Adam and Eve to make their own choice. They had to *choose* His way of life, not be forced into it. God banished them from the garden so that they couldn't eat from the tree of life and live forever in selfish misery.

Generations and generations of human beings came from Adam and Eve. Almost all of them have been cut off from receiving the Holy Spirit—except for a very few whom God has chosen. In these special instances, God gave His Holy Spirit to some men and women in the Bible and to members of His Church throughout the ages. Today, baptized adults in God's Church have the opportunity to submit to God and use His Holy Spirit—to figuratively eat from the tree of life. To eat from this tree, a person has to stop eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan still tempts those with the Holy Spirit and those with whom the Spirit is working. They must continue to choose God's way and to resist following after Satan's way of selfishness. Most people take the easy way that Satan offers. But some few resist Satan and draw close to God.

God can only work with and develop those who submit to Him. He can cause them to grow spiritually; He can give them more and more of His Holy Spirit. And finally, when Jesus Christ returns to Earth, those individuals will be transformed into God beings in His Family! This is *why* humans were created!



God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

When you are young, you learn to eat from the tree of life by *obeying* God's commandments, by *choosing* to do what God says, even when you want to do something different, perhaps when a friend suggests doing something that will break God's law. You eat this life-giving fruit when you *obey* and *choose* not to play sports or to watch entertainment on the Sabbath. You grow into someone God can ultimately bring into His Family when you refuse to lie, when you honor your parents, and when you keep all of God's commandments!

NOAH'S ARK

The vast majority of human beings do not want to obey God's commandments. That is true today, and it was true in the early generations that descended from Adam. Adam lived 930 years and had many sons and daughters. Soon the world was full of people.

It was also full of selfishness, lying, hatred, crime and murder—all bad fruits of Satan's way. The Bible records that people ate wrong foods, abused alcohol, and broke God's laws of marriage (Matthew 24:38). God created food, alcohol and marriage, but human beings abused all three.

God created Eve to give birth to children of different races, each with special characteristics. God wanted people to marry spouses within their own race so that these special attributes would endure. But Adam's descendants disobeyed and married whomever they chose. The people rejected all of God's commandments, so the world became full of evil!

To see the state of the world at this time, fill in the blanks using Genesis 6:5: "And GOD saw that the _____ of man was _____ in the earth, and that every _____ of the thoughts of his _____ was only _____ continually."

God decided to end this mess. He chose to send a worldwide flood that would drown everyone. (He would then resurrect them thousands of years later once Satan's way was eradicated and His way was being lived worldwide.)

But God found one man who was trying to obey His laws. His name was Noah.

God spoke to Noah. *Read this historic and earth-altering conversation in verses 12-14. "And _____ looked upon the _____, and, behold, it*



All of humanity mocked Noah for building the ark, but in the end only he and his family were spared.

was _____; for all _____ had _____ his [God's] way upon the _____. And God said unto _____, The _____ of all _____ is come before me; for the _____ is filled with _____ through them; and, behold, I will _____ them with the earth. Make you an _____ of _____ wood....”

There were no storms in the forecast. Everyone around Noah would have ridiculed him for building a huge boat for no reason. But he believed God, so he began to build. With help from his sons _____, _____ and _____ (Genesis 5:32), he built the vessel God specified: an ark large enough for Noah's family, thousands of animals and thousands of pounds of food. It took Noah 120 years to build it.

During this period, Noah warned people they would drown if they didn't repent. No one heeded Noah's warning from God. More than 120 years after God spoke to Noah, the ark was complete. God miraculously caused seven pairs of every clean animal and one pair of every unclean animal to come to Noah. His family loaded these animals into the stables and cages in the ark so that they would survive the Flood. Then Noah and his family boarded the ark, and God Himself sealed the door shut!

Genesis 7 records the incredible events that happened next. For a week, nothing happened. But then rain began to fall. Then it became a downpour. Geysers gushed up from the ground. Rivers overflowed their banks, washing away both people and houses. The water kept rising for 40 days until the whole world was flooded. Perhaps millions of people died. The only ones

left alive on Earth were in the ark: Noah and his family.

When the water began to recede, the ark came to rest on Mount Ararat. When Noah and his family were able to disembark, Noah offered an animal sacrifice to God. We should always remember to thank God for His blessings and protection! And in the case of Noah, if God hadn't protected him, we would not exist!

THE TOWER OF BABEL

The wives of Noah's sons had many children. And once again, the vast majority of them decided to rebel against God. They lived the same selfish way as Adam, Eve and the people before the Flood. In a land called Shinar, a powerful hunter set himself up as king. This king's name was _____ (Genesis 10:9).

The people of Shinar were angry with God for sending the Flood. They came up with a plan to rebel against Him and to escape further punishment. Fill in the blanks using Genesis 11:4 to see their plan: “And they said, Go to, let us _____ us a _____ and a _____, whose top may reach unto _____; and let us make us a _____, lest we be _____ abroad upon the face of the whole _____.”

God had promised never to send another great flood again. As a sign of His promise, He created the rainbow. The people of Shinar evidently disbelieved God's promise. They also refused to spread out across the Earth, which is what God commanded them to do.

This tower project kept the people together in one spot, united against God. God saw their evil multiplying and knew it would increase exponentially if human beings continued working together against Him. He performed a miracle and divided their one language into many languages (verse 7). Imagine talking with another worker on a construction project, then all of a sudden he's speaking Greek. Neither of you would be able to accomplish much together after that.

After God confused the languages at the tower, it became known as the “tower of Babel.” People stopped building it, and family groups traveled away from Babel, spreading out across the Earth as God intended.

ABRAHAM LEAVES HARAN

Noah lived 350 years after the Flood and saw the people rebel against God at Babel. He warned his children and grandchildren that Satan's way brings misery. But they

rejected his warning. By the time Noah died, the world was again filled with evil and selfishness!

But one man still obeyed God. He did his best to always believe God, to submit to God's definition of right and wrong, and to choose what was right even when it was easier or more tempting to choose what was wrong. When he made a mistake, he repented and asked God to help him obey better in the future. This man's name was Abram.

God decided to use Abram for a new phase in His plan.

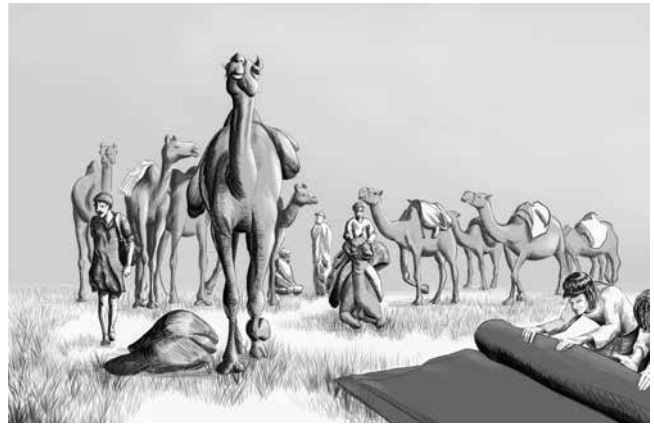
Before Abram, God used righteous men like Noah as preachers of righteousness. These men tried to lead the world back to God. God chose to do something different with Abram.

First, God commanded Abram to give up everything he had known the past 75 years. *Genesis 12:1 records what He told Abram: "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get you _____ of your _____, and from your _____, and from your father's _____, unto a _____ that I will show you."*

Imagine giving up most of your friends, your wealth, your favorite places to go. Imagine having to pack up a huge amount of belongings and family members and servants—all because God simply said to move. What would your attitude be in that situation? Abram's response is recorded in verse 4: "So Abram _____."

Because of Abram's obedience, God changed his name to *Abraham*, which means *father of a multitude*. God made special promises to Abraham, promises that directly affect *your* life today! *Genesis 13:15-16 reveal one of these foundational promises: "For all the land which you see, to _____ will I _____ it, and to your _____ . And I will make your seed as the _____ of the _____ : so that if a man can number the _____ of the _____ , then shall your seed also be numbered."*

From the time of Adam through to Noah, God had tried to use a preacher of righteousness to lead mankind back to His way of life. By doing so, He had proved that mankind would not respond to this type of warning. Now with Abraham, He was implementing something different. Abraham and his family would live separate from society, and God would make him into multiple great nations. God would work with



God commanded Abram to leave Haran, so Abram obeyed without question.

Abraham's descendants and give them an opportunity to be examples to other nations. The blessings God would give to Abraham's descendants would show the whole world the fruits of living a life of faith and obedience toward God.

In modern times, the descendants of Abraham have lived in the most blessed nations in human history: nations where young people have plenty to eat, comfortable homes, warm clothing, opportunity for education, bright futures. Though many of these blessings have been removed, the lives of young people in these nations are still much different from the lives of millions who live in crushing poverty. These blessed nations include Great Britain, the United States, Israel, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and much of northwestern Europe. Chances are, one of these nations is where *you* live.

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

Obeying God, Abraham and his household left their home in the city of Haran and traveled toward the wilderness of Canaan. God promised that if Abraham obeyed His voice, He would give the land of Canaan to him and his descendants as an eternal inheritance.

Twenty-five years passed.

It wasn't easy for Abraham and his wife, Sarah, to continue believing God's promise. Abraham had uprooted his life from Haran decades ago. He was now 99 years old. Sarah was 89 years old. Abraham and Sarah had no children. And now Sarah was too old to give birth. Abraham wondered how God could keep His promise to give him so many descendants. But he continued to be faithful.

To find out how God kept His promise, fill in the blanks using *Genesis 17:19*: “And God said, Sarah your wife shall _____ you a _____ indeed; and you shall call his name _____: and I will establish my _____ with him”

One year later, when Abraham was 100 and Sarah 90, God performed a miracle: Decades after she had passed childbearing age, Sarah became pregnant and delivered a healthy baby boy! Abraham named their son Isaac. He taught this promised, miraculous child to believe and obey God!

The pinnacle test for Abraham came when Isaac was an adult. Witness this hard trial by turning to *Genesis 22:2*: “And he said, Take now your _____, your only _____, whom you _____, and get you into the land of Moriah; and _____ him there for a _____”

Abraham had waited and waited for this son. He had battled back the strong temptation to lose faith. Now Isaac was here. Abraham loved him dearly—and now God commanded him to kill him.

But Abraham trusted God. God promised that Abraham would be the father of many nations, and they would come through Isaac. Abraham knew that



Abraham and Isaac leave for Mount Moriah early in the morning.

God would have to resurrect Isaac to keep His promise (*Hebrews 11:18-19*). Even though this was the hardest decision Abraham ever made, he chose to obey God. Abraham and Isaac left for Mount Moriah.

At Moriah, Abraham and Isaac built an altar out of stones. Isaac willingly lay down on top of this altar. This was the hardest moment in Abraham's life. Ask your father and mother about the day you were born. Ask them what emotions they had when they saw you come into the world. And ask them what they would feel if they lost you. These are the types of feelings Abraham had, except even more difficult.

But Abraham continued to obey God. He bound Isaac's hands together with cords. Tears in his eyes, his heart pounding, Abraham lifted his knife high into the air to kill his son as quickly and painlessly as possible.

“STOP!”

An angel's voice shouted out, relaying a message from God's throne: *Stop Abraham*. God was experiencing this ordeal with Abraham in a unique way: He knew that thousands of years later, He would sacrifice the Word, His own Son whom He loved. God saw Abraham's heart, and He saw that he would even sacrifice his own child if God commanded him to. At that point, God knew Abraham would keep nothing back from Him, and He spared Abraham the anguish of watching his son die.

It was not an anguish that God would spare Himself from. For the sake of saving all human beings, God would allow His Son Jesus Christ to be killed—there would be no last-second reprieve.

But God mercifully stopped Abraham. Abraham halted immediately and dropped the knife, probably collapsing from the emotion. It was a heart-wrenching trial, but *now God knew* Abraham's heart. When you go through a hardship, remember, God wants to see your heart. He wants to know what your attitude is.

When you realize the anguish that Abraham went through—and that he did it willingly for God—you will understand why Abraham is rightly called the *father of the faithful*.

God now made a bold move. He made His incredible, far-reaching promises to Abraham *unconditional*. Before, He had promised that Abraham would become the father of many nations *if* he obeyed God. Now, God *knew* Abraham would always obey. He promised to bless Abraham and his descendants, no matter what!

You can see this unconditional promise in Genesis

22:16-17: “And said, By myself have I _____, says the _____, for because you have _____, and have not _____ your son, your only _____: That in _____ I will _____ you, and in _____ I will _____ your _____ as the _____ of the _____, and as the _____ which is upon the _____”

JACOB AND ESAU

After the intense trial on Mount Moriah, it came time for Isaac to find a wife. In Abraham’s time, it was a father’s responsibility to find a spouse for his child. To obey God’s laws about preserving the beauty and variety of the races, Abraham sent his chief servant back to Haran to find a wife for Isaac from among Abraham’s relatives.

You can find out about this servant’s incredible journey in Genesis 24. Abraham was not the only person in his household who had faith; his servant saw that example and prayed for amazing miracles—and he received them!

The servant returned to Abraham’s land with a God-fearing young woman who was eager to serve. Her name was Rebekah.

Isaac loved Rebekah. Soon they were married. Yet Rebekah was not able to have children. This disappointment went on for 20 years. For two decades God tested Isaac and Rebekah’s faith. But they continued to believe God, and God healed Rebekah. She became pregnant and gave birth to twin sons.

The first son was Esau, and the second was Jacob. The twins grew up to be quite different. Esau loved hunting and exploring the woods. Jacob became a shepherd.

Isaac and Rebekah made a major mistake in raising Esau and Jacob. Isaac let himself have a favorite: Esau. Rebekah also had a favorite: Jacob. This would lead to huge problems, both during and after their lifetimes.

Read Genesis 25 to catch up with the story as Esau returns from a hunting trip. He had been gone a long time and was very hungry. He saw Jacob making a pot of lentil soup. *To find out what happened next, read verses 30-32: “And Esau said to Jacob, _____ me, I _____ you, with that same _____*

_____; for I am _____: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, _____ me this day your _____. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the _____ to _____: and what profit shall this _____ do to me?”

Esau wasn’t really about to die; he was just very hungry. He had the birthright, which means as Isaac’s eldest son, the incredible blessings that God promised Abraham and Isaac would go to Esau. But Esau didn’t value that amazing birthright. He gave up God’s promise to Abraham for *soup*.

This may seem like an isolated example. But how easy it is for a young person to give up God’s way—happiness, a bright future, health, safety, fun, family—for a girlfriend or boyfriend, or a Friday night game. The girl, boy or game seems so *real*. God’s blessings seem so *distant*. But remember, that’s exactly how Esau thought.

God actually intended for Jacob to have the birthright. He told this to Rebekah in a dream while she was still pregnant with the twins. Jacob should have waited for God to fulfill that promise. Instead, Jacob took things into his own hands and schemed to buy the birthright from Esau.

Jacob was not done with his scheming. Along with his mother, he planned to follow through on his long-devised plot to forcefully take the birthright promises.

Isaac was old and blind; he believed he would soon die. He asked Esau to go hunting and prepare his favorite venison soup; then he would give Esau a blessing. Rebekah overheard this conversation and, like Jacob, decided to deceitfully take matters into her own hands rather than rely upon God.

Jacob and Rebekah came up with a plan for Jacob to disguise himself as Esau. *To find out the plan, read Genesis 27 and fill in the blanks in this summary: Rebekah told _____ to kill two _____ so she could cook the meat to taste like _____. She told _____ to take the meat to _____ and ask for a blessing. _____ didn’t like the idea at first. He knew _____ would feel his smooth arms and know who he really was, because Esau’s arms were hairy. So Rebekah came up with a plan to deceive _____. Jacob covered his arms with the _____ of the _____ he had killed. Then he put on _____ clothes. Isaac felt the hairy goat skins on _____ arms and then*



Esau gave up his birthright for a bowl of soup.
Is anything in this life worth giving up God's promises for?

_____ Jacob, thinking he was Esau. When Esau returned home from _____, he asked Isaac to _____ him. It was too late. The blessing was already given to _____. Now _____ had both the birthright and the blessing!

This is not how God wanted to give Jacob the blessing of the birthright. But He allowed this situation to unfold to show that Jacob's deceitful attitude was wrong and that Esau's ungrateful attitude was even more wrong! Always treasure the promises God gives you!

Esau did not react with a godly attitude. He threatened to kill Jacob, his own twin brother. To stay alive, Jacob had to leave his parents. He traveled to Haran to live with Rebekah's relatives. Because he had resorted to lying, he had to run for his life! And the hardship did not end once he arrived in Haran.

JACOB WORKS FOR LABAN

Jacob bolted from Esau so fast that he did not even bother to set up a tent at night. He piled some stones together to use for a pillow and slept in the open. The grandson of Abraham and the inheritor of God's gigantic promises was in a humbling situation indeed. But God knew Jacob's attitude, and even though he had been deceitful, He would give him a chance to repent and would work with him. While Jacob slept, God showed him a hint of all this in a special dream. Turn to Genesis 28:12-15 and describe Jacob's dream:

God repeated to Jacob the same promises He had made to Abraham. He said: "I am with you, and will keep you in all places where you go."

But Jacob still had a hard road ahead. When he arrived in Haran, he lived with his Uncle Laban (Rebekah's brother). He didn't want to burden Laban's family, so he offered to work for him as a shepherd. Although he had been deceitful toward Esau, Jacob did try to live righteously, and he worked hard. He was Laban's best employee. Laban asked if there was anything he could do to pay Jacob.

Jacob loved Laban's daughter Rachel, so he asked if he could marry Rachel.

Now the man who had cheated his brother would be cheated by his uncle. Laban saw a chance to get Jacob to work for him for a long time. He told Jacob he could marry Rachel—if he worked for seven years. Jacob agreed to this deal. The seven years passed quickly for him, because he loved Rachel so much. When the time came for the marriage, Laban deceitfully disguised his older daughter, Leah, with Rachel's wedding garments. After the wedding, Jacob got the shock of his life when he realized he had married the wrong woman!

Laban had tricked Jacob with a disguise—not unlike the manner in which Jacob tricked Isaac with a disguise. Jacob was obviously furious. Laban made up an excuse that the older daughter should always marry first. Either way, Jacob now obviously had to provide for Leah. Laban told Jacob he could marry Rachel too, but only if he promised to work another seven years. It's wrong for a man to have two wives, but Jacob agreed to marry both sisters and work the extra years.

God allowed Jacob to go through this hardship, but He also rewarded Jacob for being a hard worker, and even Laban was blessed by Jacob's presence (Genesis 30:29-30). Jacob made another deal with Laban. If Laban let Jacob keep all the cattle, sheep and goats that were born with spots or speckles, Laban could keep all the pretty ones. Laban thought the deal was great. He could pay Jacob with a few speckled animals and keep all the rest. But Jacob knew a lot about being a shepherd. He took the strongest of Laban's animals and bred them with his own speckled animals. Soon most of the baby animals born were both strong and speckled. Jacob's

herds of speckled animals grew large, while Laban's herds became small.

This is one reason you should always treat people fairly. When you are unfair to others, in one way or another, you will be paid back accordingly. It's not that God strikes you down when you sin, it's simply the fact that you are breaking God's spiritual law—just as if you were on a balcony and you broke God's physical law of gravity. When we sin, it hurts!

Another lesson from Jacob's life is to always work hard. God will bless you if you follow His laws, work hard and treat people fairly. Sometimes you have to be patient, but God always blesses us when we do the right thing!

JACOB WRESTLES WITH THE WORD

When Laban saw that Jacob was amassing more animals than he had, he became angry and told Jacob he needed to leave. Jacob took his family and his herds and started traveling back to Canaan, where Isaac and Rebekah lived. Before he got home, he had a very unique and very important encounter. Catch up with the story in Genesis 32:24-30.

One night in the dark, Jacob was walking alone. Suddenly, someone came out of nowhere and began to grapple with him. Jacob didn't know it, but this person was the Word, the one who would later become Jesus Christ. Jacob wrestled with the Word all night. This means that hour after hour, Jacob wouldn't give up! At one point, the Word threw Jacob's hip out of joint. But Jacob still wouldn't give up, even though he was experiencing excruciating pain as he tried to defeat someone who just would not be beaten. Jacob had learned to never quit. As morning approached, the Word told Jacob to let Him go, but Jacob wasn't a quitter. And he knew there was something special about this person opposing him. Jacob told Him that he would never let Him go until He blessed him!

The Word blessed Jacob. *Read this blessing in verse 28: "Your _____ shall be called no more _____, but _____: for as a _____ have you _____ with _____ and with men, and have _____."*

The Word gave Jacob a new name meaning *prevailer*. Take from this unique encounter an important lesson: Never give up. You may make a mistake and sin. You may go through a hardship that lasts for *years*. You

may get blindsided by a trial that came out of nowhere. But no matter what, *never give up*. Never stop trying to live God's way of life.

When you see the name Israel, remember that God changed Jacob's name to Israel to teach you this wonderful truth: *Never give up!*

God later blessed Jacob with 12 sons. These sons would become the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel. *Turn to Genesis 49 and list these 12 sons in order:*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____

The modern-day nations that descended from these sons *still* enjoy massive amounts of blessings. This is especially true for the descendants of Joseph's two boys. Recall how Jacob, renamed Israel, passed on the amazingly abundant national physical promises of the birthright blessing to Ephraim (the British Commonwealth nations) and Manasseh (the United States). *Why* was this wealth and prosperity in these nations? It traces all the way back to the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Today, many people realize that the wealth, safety and opportunity our nations have been enjoying is quickly dissipating. That is because God fulfilled His promise and delivered these blessings, but Abraham's descendants today are sinning grossly, and these blessings are now disappearing.

This is only a *sliver* of the incredible history that connects Abraham to the way *you* are living right now. Now is a great time to crack open an awesome story that you will never forget, one that affects you personally. If this history has piqued your interest, learn more about it in Herbert W. Armstrong's amazing book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*.

BIBLE MEMORY Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings
2 Kings
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles

Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther
Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Songs
Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Joel

Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

New Testament

Matthew
Mark
Luke

John
Acts
Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon

Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude
Revelation

Published by the
Philadelphia Church of God
and produced in cooperation
with Imperial Academy.

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Old Testament Places and Names

Z I C H M X L A W K E E V O N A D R T S
E S O L N A B Q P O M I A R H P E P E A
B A J E F T N I M T R G Y B U W X K S N
H A N A P H T A L I A D C E R F U H Q T
P C E B D R I U S S I M E O N A E F Y O
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A T R J L A B A N S Z C E S E V D T U B
N Y A F U F J O S E E R E U B E N A J E
E R G T N W E N S N O Y L O N R P D G L

ABRAHAM	ESAU	ISSACHAR	MANASSEH	REUBEN
ADAM	EVE	JACOB	MOUNT MORIAH	SARAH
ASHER	GAD	JOSEPH	NAPHTALI	SIMEON
BENJAMIN	GARDEN OF EDEN	LABAN	NOAH	TOWER OF BABEL
DAN	HARAN	LEAH	RACHEL	WORD
EPHRAIM	ISAAC	LEVI	REBEKAH	ZEBULUN